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SUBJECT: TURKISH TRUCKING ASSOCIATIONS OUTLINE CONTINUING PROBLEMS IN IRAQ

REF: A. STATE 195610

- [B](#). ANKARA 4893
- [C](#). ANKARA 4529
- [D](#). ANKARA 4340
- [E](#). ISTANBUL 1249

Sensitive but Unclassified. Not for internet distribution.

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: Representatives of Turkey's two leading transporters associations told us in meetings this week that their members perceive a deteriorating security situation in Iraq, with problems now reaching as far as Mosul in the north. They also continue to see serious problems with the convoy system. While they are working to explore how insurance, secure rest stops, and private security firms can ease the difficulties faced by their members, they do not see these possibilities providing any short term relief. Despite the problems, they indicated that Turkish companies remain committed to supply operations, and that the associations continue to explore ways they can help. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) P/E Chief met separately with the leaders of Turkey's International Transporters' Association (UND), Chairman Cahit Soysal and Vice Chairman Reha Uran, and Ro-Ro Transport Association (Roder) Chairman Cumhuri Atilgan. We offer a synopsis of their comments in order to provide some additional on-the-ground information about this often confusing subject.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Convoys: Both organizations reported that their members continue to express concern about the way in which convoys for humanitarian and military cargoes are organized. Their reports indicate that rarely is the goal of one escort per ten vehicles achieved. Instead, their members complain that often one hundred trucks are grouped together with only two escorts, causing a "loss of control." (Note: We believe they are referring not to fuel shipments for the coalition--which we understand receive coalition escort on the basis of a 1:10 ration-- but to humanitarian fuel shipments for whom private security contractors are responsible. End Note.) They stressed that they would like to see smaller (20 vehicle convoys) occur in practice. In addition, members continue to report that they "never see return escorts." Terrorists, they added, know this fact, and continue to focus their attacks on the return trip. UND officials conceded that in some cases truck drivers may head off on their own to buy oil, and so drop out of the convoy system for that reason, but they argued that the reports are so unanimous that this cannot be the only factor. A final concern centers on the way in which formalities are completed at the convoy's destination. Soysal noted that trucks have to wait on the road outside secure areas for the paperwork to be completed, leaving all vehicles, but especially those at the end of the convoy, vulnerable to attack. Truckers would prefer that the trucks be admitted to the base and that formalities be finalized there. (Note: Turkish construction company and USG contractor Yuksel executive Emin Sazak raised a similar point in meetings in Ankara, noting that terrorist surveillance and threats often occur at this final stage of the delivery.)

[1](#)4. (SBU) Insurance: UND noted ref A's point regarding the inclusion of an insurance/security premium in coalition and humanitarian delivery contracts. They responded, however, that this is ineffective, as adequate insurance coverage is rarely available, and when it is (allegedly only one Turkish company will write such coverage) it is prohibitively expensive. The expense, they suggested, far exceeds what is provided for this purpose in the contracts, and thereby eats into the trucker's profit margin. If the convoy system were more effective, they added, insurance rates might fall. (Note: This insurance problem is separate from the at least equally difficult insurance issue raised by MFA (and echoed by the associations): that truckers are unable to document their insurance claims for damage or theft since U.S. military and local police do not issue the equivalent of a police report. End Note.)

[1](#)5. (SBU) Secure Rest Areas/Transshipment Centers: RODER chief Atilgan noted that progress is being made on a transshipment point near Zaho, which will offer Turkish truckers the option of transferring their deliveries to local Iraqi drivers. This will enhance security for Turkish drivers, though at the

cost of their income, since it is less lucrative to drop off goods in the North than to carry them to their final destination. UND concurred, and stressed that their goal is safe transport all the way to Baghdad-- they do not want to have to transship their goods, given both the drop in income and legal issues that result concerning who retains responsibility for the cargo. Regarding secure rest areas, Soysal noted that this is an attractive idea, but that it is difficult to move it forward given the lack of authoritative interlocutors in Iraq. "It is unclear who we can deal with on this," he stressed.

16. (SBU) Security: Both organizations reported a deteriorating security situation, with problems now reaching as far north as Mosul. If the problems reach the border, Atilgan said, "you will no longer see any Turkish truckers in Iraq." UND noted that there is some question about whether all of the attacks are the work of insurgents, or whether some stem from local operators who would like to see more goods be transshipped. Both concurred that use of private security companies is an option for Turkish truckers, and UND noted that they put information about available companies on their website (without explicit recommendation of particular firms). However, the expense again cuts into operating margins, and means that few companies take advantage of this possibility.

17. (SBU) Other issues: Neither organization saw the Syrian route (suggested by some GOT officials last week), as an alternative solution. They noted that it involves additional risks, including high charges and further bureaucratic difficulties. (Note: In contrast to MFA officials, senior Turkish Customs officials have told the Embassy that the Syrian route is impractical for truckers. End Note.) RODER noted that problems are now extending further north, into the Mosul area, which is of serious concern. UND also complained about the activities of Northern Iraqi authorities, who it alleged are acting "like they run an independent state." The latest step that has sparked outrage is the requirement that Turkish truckers buy fuel from designated stations in Iraq, and the levying of fines (240 USD per truck) for vehicles that have more than a "minimal amount" of fuel in their tanks on entering Iraq.

18. (SBU) Comment: The RODER and UND comments were a sobering indication of what Turkish drivers face in Iraq. Both organizations remain committed to helping their members cope with the difficulties that exist (even as UND continues to recommend that companies not carry coalition cargo-- a recommendation that Soysal said the organization is not yet in a position to lift). They indicated that Turkish companies remain committed to supply operations, as reflected by the 8000 to 10,000 Turkish trucks that are on the road on a daily basis in Iraq, but that the rising risks and expense could lessen that commitment. As a reminder of the threats and pressure faced by Turkish drivers, on October 1 Soysal faxed a copy of a document distributed to drivers in Iraq signed by a Ebi Basir and Ebi Jandel Teams, threatening any driver who delivers fuel to Iraq after September 30 with death. End Comment.

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